

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
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R 281050Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2583
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USMISSION USUN
USINT HAVANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 1997

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS PINT UR CU BC
SUBJ: GOB LIFTS PASSPORTS OF WOULD-BE HAVANA YOUTH FESTIVAL
ATTENDEES

REF: STATE 162867

SUMMARY: GOB HAS LIFTED 17 PASSPORTS, IN MOVE TO SCOTCH TRIP
TO HAVANA YOUTH FESTIVAL BY 30 OPPOSITION BOTSWANA NATIONAL
FRONT MEMBERS. GOB ALLEGED PART OF GROUP WAS SCHEDULED FOR
TERRORIST TRAINING AIMED AT OVERTHROW OF DEMOCRATIC INSTIT-
UTIONS IN BOTSWANA. MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MOGWE BLAMED
USSR FOR THE AFFAIR, WHICH HAS UPSET GOB. END SUMMARY.

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1. GOB ANNOUNCED JUNE 21 IT HAD TEMPORARILY WITHDRAWN PASS-
PORTS OF 17 PERSONS, MEMBERS OF A 30-PERSON DELEGATION OF THE
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MARXIST BOTSWANA NATIONAL FRONT (BNF) OPPOSITION PARTY, WHO
WERE SCHEDULED TO ATTEND THE WORLD FESTIVAL OF DEMOCRATIC
YOUTH NEXT MONTH IN HAVANA. ALTHOUGH MOST OF THE DELEGATION
WERE YOUNG, TWO OF THE IMPOUNDED PASSPORTS BELONGED TO DR
KENNETH KOMA, BNF LEADER, AND TO THE PARTY'S SECRETARY GENERAL.

2. THE GOB STATEMENT SAID THAT THE BNF HAD SECURED 30 PRE-

PAID TICKETS FOR THE TRIP FROM "ORGANIZATIONS IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES"; BUT THAT IN CONTRAST, THE GOB HAD BEEN ALLOWED BY THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE HAVANA FESTIVAL TO SEND A MAXIMUM OF FIVE PERSONS, FOR WHOM GOB WOULD HAVE TO PAY ALL EXPENSES.

3. GOB HAD RECEIVED, IT ALLEGED, RELIABLE INFORMATION THAT SOME BNF DELEGATES WERE PLANNING ONWARD TRAVEL TO "SOME OTHER COUNTRY" TO UNDERGO MILITARY TRAINING, INCLUDING "INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO SUBVERT AND OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT BY FORCE". GOB THEREFORE FELT IT "WOULD NOT BE IN THE INTERESTS OF BOTSWANA NOR IN KEEPING WITH DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE" TO ALLOW THE DELEGATION TO TRAVEL TO HAVANA. IT SAID FESTIVAL WAS BEING USED AS "A COVER FOR THE REAL OBJECTIVE, WHICH WAS TO RECRUIT AND TRAIN A GROUP OF YOUNG BATSWANA WHO WOULD FORM A NUCLEUS OF A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION TO ASSIST THE BNF AND ITS MASTERS IN SEIZING POWER UNCONSTITUTIONALLY". THE STATEMENT MADE REFERENCE TO THE RED BRIGADE AND BAADER-MEINHOF GANG, AND THE ABILITY OF SUCH SMALL TERRORIST GROUPS TO CAUSE "A SERIOUS BREAKDOWN OF LAW AND ORDER IN A DEMOCRATIC COUNTRY WHERE THE RULE OF LAW PREVAILS". ON A RATHER ANTICLIMACTIC NOTE, THE GOB ANNOUNCED THAT THE PARENTS OF SOME OF THE YOUTHS HAD INFORMED GOVERNMENT THEY DID NOT APPROVE BNF'S USING THEIR CHILDREN TO SUBVERT GOVERNMENT. END UNCLASSIFIED

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4. COMMENT: PRESIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY TIBONE TOLD DCM THAT ONLY 17 PASSPORTS HAD BEEN IMPOUNDED BECAUSE THE REMAINDER OF THE 30 BNF INVITEES HAD NOT YET PROCURED THEIR TRAVEL DOCUMENTATION.

5. EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER MOGWE HAD EARLIER MENTIONED PASSPORT IMPOUNDMENT TO AMBASSADOR. HE INDICATED THAT WHAT HAD MOST IRED GOB WERE: (A) ACTION OF SOVIET EMBASSY IN GOING DIRECTLY TO BNF WITH INVITATIONS TO HAVANA FESTIVAL, RATHER THAN THROUGH GOB, AS REQUIRED BY PRACTICE HERE; (B) FACT THAT FIVE INVITATIONS TO GOB ISSUED ONLY AT LAST MINUTE, AFTER SOVIETS KNEW GOB AWARE OF 30 BNF INVITATIONS; AND (C) CHUTSPA OF SOVIET CHARGE, WHO DISCLAIMED ANY KNOWLEDGE OF INVITATIONS, EVEN WHEN MOGWE TOLD HIM YOUTHS WERE SHORTLY TO PICK UP TICKETS AT HIS EMBASSY. REGARDING LATTER POINT, MOGWE LATER TOLD DCM HE FOUND SOVIETS "SO THICK-SKINNED IT IS UNBELIEVABLE".

6. IT MAY BE WORTH NOTING THAT, IN WAKE OF STORM, SOVIET CHARGE MARKOV AND FAMILY DEPARTED GABORONE FOR SCHEDULED HOME LEAVE ON JUNE 18, HEAVILY LADEN WITH TRUNKS AND SUITCASES. IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT THE MARKOV'S MAY NOT RETURN TO GABORONE IN VIEW

OF FACT THAT: (A) MARKOV HAS BEEN CALLED ON CARPET SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE BY MOGWE FOR ILLICIT RELATIONS WITH BNF OPPOSITION; (B) MARKOV'S STYLE APPEARS TO CLASH WITH THAT OF AMBASSADOR PETROV WHO AVOWS INTENTION OF BUILDING CORDIAL SOVIET-BOTSWANA RELATIONS; AND (C) MARKOV REMARKED TO EMBOFF THREE WEEKS AGO THAT IN SOVIET FOREIGN SERVICE A DIPLOMAT NEVER KNOWS IF HE WILL RETURN TO HIS POST AFTER HOME LEAVE; CONSEQUENTLY ON DEPARTURE HOUSEHOLD GOODS ARE CUSTOMARILY PACKED TO ANTICIPATE ANY CONTINGENCY.

7. ON ANOTHER TOPIC IN CONVERSATION WITH DCM, MOGWE DESCRIBED HOW HE HAD BEEN OUT OF THE COUNTRY (AS IS OFTEN THE CASE), AND HAD RETURNED TO BOTSWANA LAST YEAR TO BE INFORMED THAT "WE HAD ESTABLISHED RELATIONS WITH CUBA". MOGWE GAVE NO INDICATION
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THAT PRESENT NON-RESIDENT STATUS OF CUBANS WOULD SOON BE RAISED TO A RESIDENT MISSION; BUT HIS ANECDOTE IS ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE WAY DECISIONS ARE OFTEN MADE IN THE SMALL, HIGHLY PERSONAL GOB WHICH IS OVERWHELMINGLY DOMINATED BY PERSONALITY OF PRESIDENT KHAMA AND THOSE CLOSEST TO HIM. IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT KHAMA, PERCEIVING A NEED TO PRESERVE THE THIRD WORLD CREDENTIALS OF HIS BASICALLY PRO-WESTERN, CAPITALIST COUNTRY, MADE THE DECISION TO ESTABLISH RELATIONS WITH CUBA ON ADVICE OF ONE OR MORE ADVISORS WITHOUT MORE THAN PASSING REFERENCE TO MIN EXTAFF. END SOMMENT.
NORLAND

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NNN

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